

State Prekindergarten Question and Answer Sheet, 2015 - 2016

Question: How was the program in my community chosen?

Answer: Programs were identified through a competitive process that evaluates the organization's readiness to provide a high quality prekindergarten program.

Question: Does my child qualify to attend a state funded prekindergarten (Pre-K) program?

Answer: To be eligible, the child must be 4 years of age by September 1, 2015 and reside within one of the communities in which the prekindergarten programs are located. Children may only attend prekindergarten programs that are within the city/town in which they reside.

Question: Is there transportation available (busing)?

Answer: No.

Question: How are children selected to participate in a state prekindergarten (Pre-K) program?

Answer:

1. The state holds a lottery for each Pre-Kindergarten program and randomly selects children from the applications that have been submitted.
2. To enter their child into the lottery
 - a. Parents or legal guardians can (1) apply online (2) pick up an application at one of the state prekindergarten sites or (3) download an application from the RIDE website. Applications are available in English and Spanish.
 - b. Parents or legal guardians must fill out the entire application and then deliver the application to the state prekindergarten program site which they want their child to attend in the fall or complete the application online.
 - c. There is a deadline for completing online or delivering the application to the programs which will also be noted on the application. Applications must be completed online or delivered directly to the participating Pre-K programs. The Department of Education does not accept student applications for Pre-K.
 - d. Parents or legal guardians may apply at any and all sites located within their community of residence. If selected during the lottery, enrollment will be offered for that site only.
 - e. Parents or legal guardians may only apply to each program one time. Children cannot be entered into the lottery for the same program more than once.

Question: How will I know if my child is chosen to attend a state prekindergarten (Pre-K) classroom?

Answer: After the lottery has been run, the state Pre-K lottery system will send each applicant an email notification (selected or not selected) if a current email address was accurately entered as part of the

lottery application. Pre-Kindergarten programs will also contact families of the children who have been selected. **The Department of Education does not notify families.**

Question: Can anyone apply?

Answer: Yes, the prekindergarten program lottery is open to all residents in which the prekindergarten programs are located. Again, the child must be 4 years of age by September 1, 2015 AND reside in the community where the Pre-K program is located.

Question: If my family income does not impact my child's eligibility to enter the State Pre-K Program lottery, why do I need to provide family income documentation that verifies my income before my child is officially enrolled?

Answer: Income verification is necessary to ensure that income requirements for the state-funded Pre-Kindergarten are met and that classrooms reflect the income distribution of the community where they are located.

Question: Is there a waiting list if my child doesn't get in? Will I be notified if my child doesn't get in?

Answer: There is a waiting list for the prekindergarten programs. The Department of Education retains a full list of children's names, in randomized order, for each program. If a selected child does not attend a prekindergarten program for any reason, it is possible that your child will be chosen for the empty slot, should one become available, based on the order in which their name is listed. The prekindergarten program would contact you and ask you if you are still interested in having your child attend the prekindergarten program. This can happen throughout the school year, but does not happen often.

Question: Can I apply to more than one program?

Answer: Parents or legal guardians may apply at more than one site if multiple sites exist in the community of residence, but only one application per site will be accepted. If selected during the lottery, enrollment will be offered for that site only.

Question: When does the Pre-K program begin/end?

Answer: The state requires that the school year begin no later than September 7, 2015. Programs have the option of beginning earlier. The program then sets its own school calendar and must operate a full day program for 180 days. Most programs follow the traditional public school calendar, closing in June.

Question: How long is the program day? Is there before-/after-care? Do I have to pay for before/after care?

Answer: The prekindergarten program day is 6 hours long. The state prekindergarten funding does not include or pay for before/after care. However, if a family requires that service, all prekindergarten

programs support families in accessing before/after care and many accept state child care assistance funds or work in cooperation with a licensed program that does.

Question: What if my child is already enrolled in another program? (E.g. Head Start, preschool special education, etc.)

Answer: Each prekindergarten classroom enrolls 18 children. You will need to decide which program you wish your child to attend as soon as possible. You may want to contact the Head Start or school district administration to discuss this decision. You can also speak with the prekindergarten program administrator. If you decide not to enroll your child in the state prekindergarten program, that slot will be given to the next eligible child on the lottery list for that program.

Question: Is preference given to families who have previously participated in a Pre-K program?

Answer: No. Enrollment is determined solely through selection in the state lottery process.

Question: If I have twins, and fill out an application for each child, but only one child is selected, is it possible that their twin sibling can also be enrolled in the state Pre-K program?

Answer: No. Enrollment in each Pre-K program is solely determined through the lottery process. However, children who are not selected are placed, in randomized order, on the program waiting list. If a selected child does not attend a prekindergarten program for any reason, it is possible that your child will be chosen for the empty slot, based on the order in which their name is listed. The prekindergarten program would contact you and ask you if you are still interested in having your child attend the prekindergarten program.

Question: My child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Can s/he attend the state Pre-K if selected?

Answer: Yes. The State Pre-K Program is fully inclusive, supporting the learning and development needs of all children. Once your child is enrolled, an IEP meeting should be arranged with professionals from the Pre-K program and school district to discuss your child's learning goals and how they can be achieved within the state Pre-Kindergarten program.

Question: My child's primary language is not English. Can s/he attend the state Pre-K if selected?

Answer: Yes. The state Pre-K program supports the learning and development of all children, including children whose primary language is not English.

Question: Where can I find out more about the program I want to apply to?

Answer: During the Pre-K lottery period, all prekindergarten programs are open for tours and to support families in learning more about their program philosophy, policies and classroom curriculum. You are

encouraged to contact each program to get more details on opportunities to tour the program or to speak directly to their administrator and or teacher about their program. When you visit, some great questions to ask are:

- Describe your curriculum and how it supports children's learning in relation to the RI Early Learning and Development Standards
- How do teachers use information from families to develop their curriculum so that it reflects children's interests and family cultures?
- How do teachers assess children on a regular basis?
- How does the program support children who are at very different developmental levels?
- How will I learn about my child's progress and what happens in the classroom?
- What opportunities do I have as a parent to be involved in my child's education?

Question: Who do I contact if I have more questions?

Answer: Please contact Kristen Greene at the RI Department of Education at kristen.greene@ride.ri.gov or 222-8168 with any further questions.